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CBC Newsletter

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For members of the Carolina Bird Club, Inc., Ornithological Society of the Carolinas

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We're Going to the Beach!
Winter 2010 Meeting at Atlantic Beach, NC

Lena Gallitano

How often have you heard that excited exclamation by someone, young or old, when talking about a few days away from home? How often have you heard that from a birder planning a winter birding trip? From a CBC member when they were talking about a winter meeting? Hopefully many, many times and the winter of 2010 is no exception. We're going to Atlantic Beach to explore this beautiful area of North Carolina along with the exceptional birds that winter brings. From seabirds to shorebirds, from ducks to hummingbirds, this area has them all. Our goal is to surpass the 166 species seen at our last Atlantic Beach meeting in 2005. Of course to do that, we'll need all "eyes" on deck, so mark your calendars now to join us January 29-31, 2010.

North Carolina's Crystal Coast provides many unique habitats to explore, and within each habitat, a unique complex of wintering and resident birds. We'll have an opportunity to explore the barrier islands from Cape Lookout, with its magnificent lighthouse, to Bear Island with Hammocks Beach State Park. Time will allow for ocean watching as well as to study at length some of the resting gulls and shorebirds – always a challenge in their winter plumages. The area marshes might provide a glimpse of an elusive rail, while ducks should be abundant. With some luck, a rare winter hummingbird might even be on hand to help a few with their life lists.

Of course, the beach is not the only attractive habitat for our winter birds along the coast. On the mainland, forests, isolated wetlands, shrublands and ponds provide other interesting habitats. A Red-cockaded Woodpecker is a possibility in some of the pine forests, while birders may be challenged with the smaller songbirds and sparrows. The ever-present wintering Yellow-rumped Warbler might be the most numerous bird of the weekend on the mainland, but there are sure to be many other surprises as well with all the birders scouring the area.

The Saturday night program entitled "Passionate Birder: Lynn Barber's ABA Big Year" will feature Lynn, a past CBC member who is well known in the Carolinas. She currently lives with her husband and dog in Texas, but has made her mark nationally with her 2008 Big Year birding forays across America. After our traditional buffet dinner, Lynn will share her exuberance for birding and her story of thousands of miles traveled and hundreds of species seen.

Realizing that Atlantic Beach is quite a drive for many, and some may want to take advantage of other birding opportunities while in the area, we've added a pelagic trip on Wednesday, January 27 aboard the Stormy Petrel II with Captain Brian Patteson. This trip will have maximum and minimum limits, but as we all know, birding in the Gulf Stream with Brian is

(Continued on page 2)

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Flight of "Hope": A Whimbrel's Tale

Bryan Watts

(Williamsburg, VA 8/16/09)---Hope, a Whimbrel carrying a satellite transmitter, is far out to sea flying south over the Atlantic toward her wintering grounds in South America. The bird had been staging (building up energy reserves in preparation for a migratory flight) on Southampton Island in the northern reach of Hudson Bay since 15 July before leaving on a non-stop flight south on 10 August. The bird flew south over Hudson Bay, crossed the interior of Canada and New England to emerge from the coast of Maine and out over the open ocean. Flying more than 1,600 kilometers (1000 miles) out over the ocean and east of Bermuda, Hope then turned south and is now moving toward the Caribbean. She has already flown non-stop for more than 5,100 kilometers (3,200 miles) but is still 400 kilometers (250 miles) from the nearest land in the Virgin Islands. So far, Hope has been on the wing for 4 days with an average flight speed of 60 kilometers/hour (37 miles/hour).

Hope was originally captured and fitted with a satellite transmitter on 19 May, 2009 while staging on the Delmarva Peninsula of Virginia. She left Virginia on 26 May and flew to the western shore of James Bay in Canada. She staged on James Bay for 3 weeks before flying to the MacKenzie River near Alaska and then on to the Beaufort Sea where she staged for more than 2 weeks before flying back to Hudson Bay. Hope has traveled more than 13,000 kilometers (8,000 miles) since late May.

Hope is one of several birds that have been fitted with state-of-the-art 9.5-gram satellite transmitters in a collaborative effort by the Center for Conservation Biology at the College of William and Mary, Virginia Commonwealth University, and the Virginia Chapter of the Nature Conservancy to discover migratory routes that connect breeding and winter areas and to identify en route migratory staging areas that are critical to the conservation of this declining species. Updated tracking maps may be viewed online at: http://www.ccb-wm.org/programs/migration/Whimbrel/whimbrel.htm

The Whimbrel is a large, holarctic, highly migratory shorebird. The North American race includes two disjunct breeding populations, both of which winter primarily in Central and South America. The western population breeds in Alaska and the Northwest Territories of Canada. The eastern population breeds south and west of Hudson Bay in Manitoba and Ontario. Both populations are of high conservation concern due to dramatic declines in recent decades.

Satellite tracking represents only one aspect of a broader, integrated investigation of Whimbrel migration. During the past two years, the Center for Conservation, in partnership with The Nature Conservancy and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, has used conventional transmitters to examine stopover duration, conducted aerial surveys to estimate seasonal numbers, collected feather samples to locate summer and winter areas through stable-isotope analysis, and has initiated a Whimbrel watch program. Continued research is planned to further link populations across staging, breeding, and wintering areas and to determine the ecological requirements of Whimbrels staging along the peninsula.

Editor's Note: As of September 1, Hope was enjoying the sunny skies of St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Sounds like a nice place to spend the winter if you ask me!

Atlantic Beach Meeting (continued)

always a great adventure, so be sure to add this date to your calendar for planning purposes. En route from Hatteras to Atlantic Beach, plan to stop on Ocracoke Island for some birding on your own before taking the Cedar Island ferry, where you might see large flocks of waterfowl along the way.

As in 2005, our headquarters hotel will be the Sheraton Atlantic Beach, which has the added advantage of a pier for sea watching – will someone sight another Dovekie or perhaps a Razorbill from the pier? Only time will tell, but before you do another thing, go mark your calendar for January 2010 – the next newsletter will have all the details for registration. See you at the beach!

We Have a Mission Statement!

During the its annual Planning Retreat in Charlotte on July 31 and August 1, 2009 the CBC Executive Committee developed and adopted a mission statement for the club.

The purpose of the statement is to ensure a mutual understanding among CBC members of the reasons for the existence of the club so as to:

- Effectively conduct CBC business;
- Ensure appropriate financial management and adequate funds and resources to meet the needs and responsibilities of the CBC;
- Work in cooperation with other organizations, as appropriate, to carry out CBC activities.

Mission Statement

The Carolina Bird Club is a non-profit organization which represents and supports the birding community in the Carolinas through its official website, publications, meetings, workshops, trips, and partnerships, whose mission is:

- **To promote the observation, enjoyment, and study of birds;**
- **To provide opportunities for birders to become acquainted, and to share information and experience;**
- **To maintain well-documented records of birds in the Carolinas;**
- **To support the protection and conservation of birds and their habitats and foster an appreciation and respect of natural resources;**
- **To promote educational opportunities in bird and nature study;**
- **To support research on birds of the Carolinas and their habitats.**

CBC Newsletter and The Chat Now Available Online!

The most recent editions of the Newsletter and The Chat are online at the CBC website. Older editions of The Chat are free for anyone to download, but the CBC Newsletter and the two most recent calendar years of The Chat are available only to CBC members. All CBC members will use the same username and password to access these publications. The username is "**member**" and the password is "**birdfun**".

This is a membership benefit, please don't share the password with non-members! The password will be changed from time to time, but can always be found in the most recent print edition of the Newsletter.

Go to http://www.carolinabirdclub.org/newsletter
to access the Newsletter, and
http://www.carolinabirdclub.org/chat
to access The Chat.

Address Change

Please note that we are in the process of changing the correspondence address for Club business. The Falls of the Neuse mail box is being discontinued. The new address for most correspondence is:

The Carolina Bird Club
1809 Lakepark Drive
Raleigh, NC 27612

Trip registrations will continue to go to the Bloomingdale, Illinois address. This will be explicitly stated on the registration forms.

Many thanks to Karen and Joe Bearden for volunteering to help with the "snail mail"!

The opinions expressed in the CBC Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Carolina Bird Club or its members, but are those of the authors who have contributed material. All CBC members are encouraged to submit content for publication. Submitted articles may be edited for style, content, or length prior to publication. Submissions may be made in electronic format to newsletter@carolinabirdclub.org, or by mail to the address on the back cover.

Your CBC Dollars at Work: Swainson's Warbler Research

In 2008 Neil Chartier, student of the Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences Program at North Carolina State University, received a grant of $780 from the Carolina Bird Club to support his dissertation work on a project titled "Investigating factors influencing nest survival of Swainson's Warbler (*Limnothlypis swainsonii*) along the Roanoke River, NC". Neil reports: "This grant was critical to a successful 2008 field season because it helped alleviate a significant budgetary shortfall due to unforeseen expenses and cost increases. Grant funds were used to purchase 300 VHS tapes and three 12-volt marine deep-cycle batteries. Field work, begun in 2006, continued from late April through July 2008. The VHS tapes and batteries purchased with grant funds contributed to much greater video recording capability needed to monitor most Swainson's Warblers located. In 2008, our increased nest monitoring capability was crucial, as we increased our nest sample size by 57%." In 2007 28 nests were monitored, and in 2008 44 nests were monitored.

Neil reports that he was able to continuously monitor 68 of 72 Swainson's Warbler nests and study 217 Swainson's Warblers in hand. Neil indicates: "Preliminary results to date indicate apparent nest success was 29%. Infrared video cameras continuously monitored 68 Swainson's Warbler nests. Preliminary results indicate Black Rat Snakes (*Elaphe obsoleta*) were the main nest predator, as they depredated 25 nests (35% of all nests, 49% of all nest failures). There was a 13% rate of Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) parasitism, accounting for 18% of all nest failures. Forty-nine young fledged from 21 nests, with an average of 2.3 young fledged per successful nest. Preliminary analysis of nest videos has produced several interesting observations. A Harvestman (*Opiliones* sp.) was seen feeding on two 3-day old nestlings. Copperheads (*Agkistrodon contortrix*) depredated two nests. In addition, an Eastern Screech-Owl (*Megascops asio*) depredated a nest with four nestlings, and an unknown rodent species depredated a nest with one egg. A Yellow-breasted Chat (*Icteria virens)* visited a nest… and the nest was abandoned the next day. A Carolina Wren (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) severely damaged a nest with two 6-day old nestlings while both warbler parents were at the nest (the nest collapsed and failed the next day). Another Carolina Wren interacted with (e.g., pecked, tossed, and attempted to brood) a 20-minute old warbler nestling, which survived the encounter. Analyses of nest videos, telemetry data, and vegetation data are continuing. Planning is underway for our fourth and final field season in 2009, with a dissertation due in 2010."

The Carolina Bird Club makes grant money available to researchers studying birds and bird-related subjects related to the Carolinas. More information on these grants can be found on the Club's website at www.carolinabirdclub.org/grants.

Welcome New Members!

The CBC warmly welcomes the following new members:

Mary Jo Dawson
Aiken, SC

Simon Harvey
Simpsonville, SC

Judy Neuschafer
Smithfield, NC

Amy Williamson
Wilmington, NC

Jill Palmer
Will Stuart
Matthews, NC

Natalie Staples
West Columbia, SC

Sharon Watson
Columbia, SC

Martha DeLong
Hertford, NC

Richard DeLong
Hertford, NC

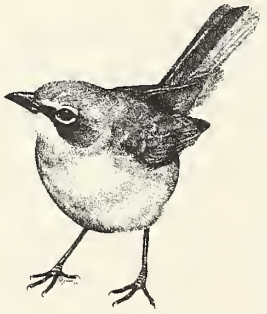
David Kirk
Easley, SC

Sandra and Frank Osborne
Lexington, SC

James Rogers
Hickory, NC

Natalie Smith
Columbia, SC

Leslie Wieser
Matthews, NC



Lynne Mattocks Lucas

A Sense of Place

Ginger Travis

I recently finished writing an article for a local free paper on the NC Birding Trail — where to go and how to enjoy it. The article made me think hard about some of the disappointments I have had visiting birding trail sites in other states, especially Florida. Bad timing was the trouble there. You look at some highly touted places and you say to yourself: "What exactly is the big deal? And where the heck are those [insert target species]?"

I have been similarly disappointed visiting places that seemed so vivid and attractive to me in books – places written about by people who loved them deeply. An example is "Cross Creek" by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. This is her nonfiction description of the part of Florida near Gainesville where she lived for many years (finding a personal refuge) and also where her novel, "The Yearling," is set. "Cross Creek" made a very deep impression on me. So I made a pilgrimage there about 30 years ago, took a look at her house and yard and thought, "This is it?"

My experiences visiting other people's patches came to mind recently when a fellow birder visited my patch and expressed great disappointment in it. Rationally I could see the point, but I felt . . . wounded. I wanted to leap to the defense of my lake.

Maybe you feel that same protectiveness about some patch of earth somewhere? Your favorite birding spot? A beloved refuge from your childhood? I do think it's human nature to love the place you know the most deeply – or where you spent your happiest hours.

For what it's worth, here are a few thoughts on avoiding disappointment – at Jordan Lake or at any birding hotspot.

If you visit as a stranger – as a traveling birder – timing is everything. Jordan, for example, actually can be beautiful, especially in spring and especially after a cold front has dried out the air and made everything razor sharp. And it can be extraordinarily birdy. Not always… but May is almost dependably sublime.

It also helps to understand where the local birders are coming from, since they're the voices who interpret their patch for the larger birding world. Jordan and nearby Falls Lake are about all we've got in the way of big water in the middle of Piedmont NC. We also have a very large population of birders here, including some of the state's sharpest. So the horde of locals goes out to Jordan, and we bird the heck out of it – and see the rarities like Glaucous Gull, Wood Stork, the post-hurricane pelagic species, as well as the ordinary Green Herons and swarms of swallows and July-arriving Great Egrets and ever-fascinating Bald Eagles. In our familiarity we learn to love this tattered sinner of a lake, even as some of us shake our heads at what a mess it is. And then we write -- postings that reflect the pleasure we wring out of it but seldom our dismay.

The moral to this story: 1. Read the fine print concerning best times to visit; get a checklist with seasonal distribution if you can; and try not to pin your hopes on the down times. 2. Ask the local birders what they don't ordinarily mention: the times when their beloved patch isn't so lovable or so birdy. 3. Expect a nice surprise, regardless of where and when you go. I really mean this. If it's not the birds, then it could be a rare plant, a deer swimming a river, a very interesting snake, a sunset, or a great old building. 4. If you have to stay home, find yourself a place to love. I can still hear Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young singing in my head: "If you can't be with the one you love, love the one you're with. Love the one you're with."

Long-tailed Ducks Grace the 2009-2010 "Duck Stamp"

A pair of winter-plumaged Long-tailed Ducks (formerly known as Oldsquaw) are featured on the 2009-2010 Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps, popularly known as "Duck Stamps". Proceeds from the sale of the stamps are used to purchase habitat for inclusion in the National Wildlife Refuge program. Single stamps are $15 and available at larger post offices and wherever hunting licenses are sold.

Bonus Field Trip to Virginia Beach and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel — January 9-10, 2010

The Carolina Bird Club is again offering a chance to bird one of the more interesting sites along the mid-Atlantic coast, the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel (CBBT).

The complex's four manmade rocky islands act as a magnet for sea ducks, gulls, and other birds. With luck we should be able to leisurely study each of the world's three scoter species (birds more often than not seen in distant, fast-moving lines), enjoy the spectacularly plumaged male Long-tailed Duck, search for shorebirds (including Purple Sandpiper) on the rocks, compare the various plumages of Great and Double-crested Cormorants, and hope for a rarity or two like Common Eider, Common Goldeneye, King Eider, or one of the uncommon gulls.

This year's trip will expand to include a day of birding in a variety of habitats in the Virginia Beach area on Saturday, followed by a visit to the CBBT on Sunday.

Participation is limited to CBC members (but one can join at the same time as you register for the trip!)

Logistics: The trip will begin at 10:00 a.m. Saturday, January 9 at the Whitehurst Tract in southern Virginia Beach. This conservation area includes forest, shallow impoundments, great sparrow habitat, and more. During the day we plan to visit a number of nearby areas that provide wintering habitat for shorebirds, hawks and falcons, more sparrows, waterfowl and more. At dusk we'll visit Mackay Island NWR for the nightly arrival of the Snow Geese as they return to roosting areas after spending the day feeding in nearby wetlands and fields.

On Sunday morning we plan to visit the CBBT, spending an hour or so on each of the islands closed to the public (known as islands #2, #3, and #4) and as much time as we like on the publicly accessible island (known as island #1). The **$25 registration fee** covers the required police escort on the CBBT and guided birding throughout the day Saturday and Sunday. Not included are lodging, meals, tolls, or fuel expenses. In January hotel rooms are generally plentiful and inexpensive. We will combine to as few vehicles as possible Sunday morning for the trip to the bridge islands. There is a toll of (at press time) $12 to cross the bridge. For those who wish to independently visit sites on the Eastern Shore of Virginia after the trip ends during the early afternoon on Sunday, the return toll is $5 if made within 24 hours of the original fee payment. Participants will be required to provide government-issued photo ID at the CBBT if requested.

To Sign Up: This trip is strictly limited to 14 participants. Confirmed slots on the trip are based on receipt of a completed application and fee by the CBC HQ Secretary, and are on a first-come-first served basis.

Download an application form from the CBC website (www.carolinabirdclub.org) or e-mail Steve Shultz (sshultz@nc.rr.com) for a copy. The form and trip fee must be received by the CBC HQ Secretary no later than three weeks prior to the trip in order to provide the Bridge Tunnel Authority with a listing of participants. Please note that a Social Security Number is required from each participant so that the CBBT Authority may perform their background checks. The CBC will not retain this information once the trip has been completed. We regret that applications without this information cannot be accepted. Due to the requirement of having a participant list available to the CBBT staff three weeks prior to the trip, last minute changes to the roster cannot be made, and a wait list will not be kept. Similarly, since we cannot replace a participant, refunds cannot be made within three weeks of the trip for participants who need to cancel.

Participants will receive additional information regarding directions, "what to bring", etc. upon confirmation of the final roster.

Virginia Beach and the CBBT are great places to bird! If you've never been, it is a rewarding experience. Even if the birding is slow (which is usually not the case) the possibility of wintering seals, seagoing ships, and spectacular scenery make the trip worthwhile.

Hope to see you there!

Huntington Beach, South Carolina
Bonus Field Trip - December 5, 2009

Considered by many to be the "Birding Jewel of the Grand Strand", Huntington Beach State Park usually lands somewhere near the top on "Best Places to Bird in South Carolina" lists.

Join fellow Carolina Bird Club members as we survey the marshes, beaches, ocean, jetty, and maritime forest for wintering passerines, waterfowl, shorebirds, waders, rails, raptors and more. This full-day bonus trip starts at 8:00 a.m. and continues until dusk. During the day we plan to visit a variety of habitats that should provide a nice list of species before dark. Target birds include Red-throated Loon, Piping Plover, Purple Sandpiper, Red Knot, Clapper Rail, Sora, Peregrine Falcon, sea ducks, Reddish Egret, Marsh Wren, Seaside Sparrow, Saltmarsh Sparrow, Nelson's Sparrow, and more.

The trip includes a visit to the rock jetty marking the south end of Murrells Inlet. Be prepared for a mile and a half walk through soft sand each way. Participants who do not wish to visit the jetty can bird areas near the North Beach parking area while the others are down the beach.

Fee: $10

Please note that the state park charges a $5 per person entrance fee, payable on arrival, that is not included in the trip fee noted above.

Logistics: Dress for the weather, consider insect repellant if we are enjoying a warm early winter, bring a scope if you have one (if not, there should be plenty to go around), and plan on a picnic lunch in the park. A camp store sells snacks and beverages, but the selection is somewhat limited during the winter months. Restrooms are located throughout the park. A significant portion of the trip is handicapped accessible.

To Register: Contact Steve Shultz at sshultz@nc.rr.com or (919) 779-2826 to be added to the roster. After confirming your slot, return the form below with your fee to the address shown.

CBC Huntington Beach Bonus Field Trip Registration Form

Name(s) _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Day Phone _____ Evening phone _____ Email _____

I am enclosing $_____ for the following bonus field trips:

Huntington Beach, SC Bonus Trip _____ x $10 = $ _____

Club policy requires all field trip participants to comply with the field trip leader's assessment and requests concerning the physical ability of each participant to make or complete the trip.

I release and discharge (and will not make a claim against) Carolina Bird Club for injury, death, or property damage arising from my participation at this meeting and/or Club field trips. This release of liability is entered into on behalf of all members of my family, including all minors accompanying me. I certify that I am the parent or legal guardian of any such minors and that I am over 18 years of age.

Signature _____ Date _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Make check payable to Carolina Bird Club and send to: CBC, 353 Montabello, Bloomingdale, IL 60108

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Upcoming CBC Meetings

Hickory, NC September 25-27, 2009
Atlantic Beach, NC January 29-31, 2010

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CBC Website: www.carolinabirdclub.org

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